

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



SENATE FISH AND GAME
EXHIBIT NO. 5
DATE 3-13-07
BILL JOHN BOUNCES
LT. GOVERNOR

March 12, 2007

The Honorable Jon Tester
United States Senate
B40 E Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Tester:

Montana's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan calls for creation of a program to reduce the risk of wolf predation on livestock and to reimburse livestock producers for the fair market value of unavoidable losses. A broad range of Montana citizens worked over the past 18 months to develop the "Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program" in response to this need. The Montana legislature is currently considering House Bill 364 that would establish this program and create a 7-member board to administer this program, but funding remains a critical issue.

Recovery of wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains was mandated by the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Accordingly, it is appropriate that the federal government contribute to the cost of conserving this recovered population, including reducing depredation and reimbursing Montana's livestock producers for their losses to wolves.

Montana's citizens have done their part by fitting wolves into the landscape as a restored native species and developing a program that has both proactive efforts to prevent livestock depredation and a mechanism for reimbursing producers. Independent investigations will be performed by USDA Wildlife Services using objective criteria for determining value of lost animals to prevent fraud or abuse.

Now it is time for the federal government to uphold its end of the bargain. I urge you to find a means to provide the necessary federal funding for wolf conservation and management in Montana, including the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program. Such funding is essential to assure the continued success of wolf recovery and delisting under the ESA, and most appropriate given the national interest in wolves in our state.

I ask that your staff work with the other members of Montana's delegation and directly with personnel in the Montana Departments of Livestock and Fish, Wildlife and Parks on any issues or questions you may have regarding this program or Montana's funding needs.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Schweitzer", followed by a stylized flourish.
BRIAN SCHWEITZER
Governor

c: Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Montana Department of Livestock
Montana Congressional Delegation